

# **NARRATIVE ON THE DIMENSIONS OF RACIST, POLITICAL REPRESSION AND RELIGIOUS VILIFICATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE UNITED STATES**

It is widely presumed that the events of 911 so traumatized the American government that it initiated policies and enacted laws contrary to its history and traditions as a champion of Human Rights and political democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

## **Overview:**

Historically the U.S. government, with the overwhelming support of its majority white European population, themselves of immigrant backgrounds, have carried out legal and extra-legal pogroms against indigenous peoples, and national minorities, especially against its “citizens” of African ancestry who are perceived as an innate “national security” threat to the institutional edifice and social fabric of white skin male privilege and the system of oligarchic style democracy, herein loosely defined here as “democratic fascism”<sup>1</sup>

Many Americans, and Europeans view the passage of the Patriot Act<sup>2</sup> and the U.S. policies of vilifying, harassing, and disrupting Islamic support, Dawah, and humanitarian assistance programs in the U.S., often labeling Islamic fraternal activities as support of “terrorist organizations” or “radical Islamic movements” as an aberration or a new American approach to “fighting terrorism”, such viewpoints are incorrect. Across America, the U.S. denigration of immigrant populations, contempt for Islamic traditions, values, and intellect is not unlike those practiced by its Western European allies.

In African and poor communities across America, the symbiosis of naked police terrorism, and corporate\state industrialization of the criminal justice system serve as a coercive formula of urban socio-political management by whites of minority – majority populations who have ‘over run’ key centers of Telecommunications, Commerce, Transportation, and Real estate once dominated

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1 Democratic Fascism: a political process by which a wealthy minority elite, through its control of financial institutions manufacture the political consent of the majority population. Also, “tyranny of the majority”.

2The USA PATRIOT Act (commonly known as the "Patriot Act") is an Act of the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 26, 2001. The title of the Act is a contrived acronym, which stands for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001

by racially “white” populations (urban areas in desperate need of infrastructure redesign and modification). Recent rebellions in France, Italy, and other EU nations serve as a sober reminder of the vestiges of European imperialism that brought cheap non-European labor to Europe’s thriving Cities: Africans, Arabs, and Asians often subjects of discrimination performed the vital role of the capitalist underclass in nations grown rich off of the plunder of their homelands. Both the post colonial immigrant flow from former colonies to the centers of commerce and wealth that beset European states, and consequences of Urbanization in America share similar characteristics. Perhaps it can be said of capitalist driven global culture that it has reduced the entire world to a global ghetto.

Despite these comparisons, few governments have exhibited clearer propensities for racist political repression than successive U.S. governments stretching back almost a hundred years, nor have any modern government, except perhaps the Israeli settler state, exhibited a more consistent or tenacious policy of targeting a people’s right to self-determination as the United States government in its repression of the radical Black Liberation struggle and concepts of Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism.

It is within the historical context of racist non-religious persecution that the repression, curtailment, and hatred of Muslims in America arise. This can be documented and verified if the historical evolution of U.S. domestic political repression is examined. U.S. domestic and foreign policies are a twin-headed Hydra. A mixture of domestic far-right – liberal political theatre, and imperial hubris and militarism in foreign policy. More often than not, one feeds off of the other.

### **Political and Racist Origins of Patriot Act and Bush’s War On Terror and Attacks on Islam**

The institutional framework former U.S. President George Bush was able to call into play to implement the provisions of the hastily legislated Patriot and seemingly overnight usurp the civil liberties of American citizens was established over a half-century ago. The ideological Grandfather of the Patriot Act was a secret and illegal FBI political disruption campaign called COINTELPRO.

As indicated earlier, although COINTELPRO was first exposed during the Watergate period, and incomparably more serious than anything charged against former President Richard Nixon, it was virtually ignored by the national press and American mass media. A review of these programs demonstrates the relative insignificance of the charges raised against Nixon and his associates, specifically,

the charges presented in the Congressional Articles of Impeachment.

In the early 1970s, as the U.S. sought a way out of Vietnam. However, a series of revelations about governmental transgressions plagued the Nixon administration. A "credibility gap" widen over the years as U.S. officials tried to trick the American public into supporting the U.S. war in Southeast Asia. Public distrust of government had reached epic proportions when Daniel Ellsberg leaked the "Pentagon Papers," a highly secret government documentation of official duplicity used to justify American intervention in Vietnam. Sensitive excerpts were published in the New York Times and drew widespread public condemnation.

Then on March 8, 1971, a group calling itself the *Citizen's Commission to Investigate the FBI*, broke into an FBI office in a small town called Media, Pennsylvania. This break-in subjected the FBI to a tactic it was accustom to practicing on political dissidents – the "black bag job". In FBI parlance a "black bag job" was a surreptitious illegal break-in to a premise to spy, place listening devices, or steal confidential information. Watergate was a White House authorized "Black-bag job" gone sour. The information obtained from the Media PA break-in was widely distributed across the political spectrum from the New Left to the anti-war peace movements, and was summarized the following week in the Washington Post editorial.

An analysis of the documents in the FBI Media, PA, office revealed that 1 percent were devoted to organized crime, mostly gambling; 30 percent were "manuals, routine forms, and similar procedural matter"; 40 percent were devoted to political surveillance and the like, including two cases involving right-wing groups, ten concerning immigrants, and over 200 on left or liberal groups. Another 14 percent of the documents concerned draft resistance and "leaving the military without government permission." The remainder - only 15% - concerned bank robberies, murder, rape, and interstate theft.

Among the 34 cases [of infiltration] for which some information is available, 11 involved white campus groups, 11, predominantly white peace groups and/or economic groups; 10, black and Chicano groups; and two right-wing groups." Furthermore, "in two-thirds of the 34 cases considered here paid FBI informants who had infiltrated these groups appear to have gone beyond passive information gathering to active provocation."<sup>3</sup> The FBI files seized in Media, PA only reflected the tip of a massive political iceberg of secret government repression, disruption of organizations opposed to government policies as well as assassinations, and targeting of African-American leaders in America. Indeed, subsequent

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<sup>3</sup>FBI church committee report

investigations in the government's COINTELPRO operations would reveal that fully over 70% of COINTELPRO operations were aimed at the African-American population, and in its final years of operation, over half of that percentage was directed at the Black Panther Party alone.

One year later, the political scandal known as Watergate began to unravel, when five men were arrested for breaking into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee, located in the Watergate apartment and office complex in Washington, D.C. It was soon discovered that one of the men was employed by the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) and that the break-in had been planned by two others with close ties to the White House.

With the unprecedented exposure of Nixon's dirty political tactics a potentially volatile set of circumstances existed that threatened to completely undermine Nixon's "Law and Order" image and his manipulation of the White working class backlash to the Urban rebellions and protests of the sixties. Nixon had staked his political career on white America's resentment over the protest movements and Black militancy of the sixties. Nixon claimed to be the champion of the "silent majority" and wanted to politically exploit the sense of "white victimhood" felt by many whites to insure Republican retention of the White House (his re-election).

This was Nixon's plan during his first term in office when he launched the "war on drugs" and began the militarization of state and local law enforcement agencies with the implementation of the Law Enforcement Assistance Association (LEAA). From 1600 Pennsylvania Ave the orders went out: The United States would launch a government-wide effort to convince the public that its institutions were fundamentally sound, albeit in need of fine-tuning and a bit of housecleaning. It was immediately announced that U.S. ground forces would be withdrawn from Vietnam as rapidly as possible. Televised congressional hearings were staged to "get to the bottom of Watergate," a spectacle which soon led to the resignations of a number of Nixon officials, the brief imprisonment of a few of them, and the eventual resignation of the president himself. It was all a show.

The ousting of Richard Nixon for his misdeeds on August 9, 1974 was described in the American press as "a stunning vindication of our constitutional system." Yet the Watergate affair -- allegedly the media's finest hour -- merely demonstrated their continued subservience to power and official ideology. Even after the dust had settled over Watergate, and a southern bred Peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter elected "interim" President to assuage anti-republican public sentiments aroused by the war and Watergate) there was virtually no mention of the government's COINTELPRO programs of violence and disruption or the FBI's NEWKILL anti-urban guerilla charter with local law enforcement agencies (more on NEWKILL)

later. Admittedly “NEWKILL” which was launched in 1971 was still secret when Nixon left office, but COINTELPRO was not. Nonetheless, after the Watergate affair was successfully concluded more than 35 years ago, there has been only occasional discussion of COINTELPRO’s true dimensions and effects on civil liberties and influence on American domestic law enforcement.

### **The Church Committee: COINTELPRO Disclosure as cover-up of widespread Police corruption and Domestic Spying.**

Beginning in 1974, the Senate held hearings to investigate COINTELPRO and other intelligence agency abuses. No other congressional investigation into these types of matters has been so extensive, either before or since.

The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, commonly known as the “Church committee”, after Chairman Frank Church, produced a extensive series of reports entitled, “Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans,” encompassing not only COINTELPRO, but also a wide variety of other subjects, including electronic surveillance by the National Security Agency, domestic CIA mail opening programs, the misuse of the IRS, the assassination of President Kennedy, covert actions abroad, assassination plots involving foreign leaders, and various topics related to military intelligence.

The Church committee found that COINTELPRO, presumably set up to protect national security and prevent violence, actually engaged in other actions **"which had no conceivable rational relationship to either national security or violent activity. The unexpressed major premise of much of COINTELPRO is that the Bureau has a role in maintaining the existing social order, and that its efforts should be aimed toward combating those who threaten that order."**

This meant that the Bureau would take actions against individuals and organizations simply because they were critical of government policy. The Church committee report gives examples of such actions, violations of the right of free speech and association, where the FBI targeted people because they opposed U.S. foreign policy, or criticized the Chicago police actions at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The documents assembled by the Church committee *"compel the conclusion that Federal law enforcement officers looked upon themselves as guardians of the status quo"* and cite the surveillance and harassment of Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of this. But the Church Committee stopped short of investigating the federal governments role in the killings, imprisonment, and criminalization of Black militant activity by state and

local law enforcement agencies. The murder of BPP members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by the Chicago police Department, the conspiracy trials of the New York Panthers and killing of Black Liberation Army fighters by joint state and federal task forces were never investigated.

It is worth noting here, that in mid sixties, New York and Chicago Police Departments were coming under scrutiny for widespread corruption. The NYPD for instance was one of the most corrupt police organizations in America. Millions of dollars a year were paid in kickbacks from illegal gambling, prostitution, and drug trafficking to New York policemen on the take. False convictions and frame-ups were routine procedures in the handling “criminal” cases. After the destruction the NY Panthers, (1971) the “Knapp Commission”, and other special investigations revealed wide spread and systematic police corruption in New York.

This corruption extended from the lowest cop on the street to the highest levels of police command and control. The Prosecutors offices in New York turned a blind eye to this corruption while going after perceived Black militant plots and street level criminals. The indictment of 21 Panthers by New York’s District Attorney Frank S. Hogan in the spring 1969 was the beginning of a long campaign to criminalize opposition to police brutality in that city and draw attention away from institutional Police corruption before that corruption became the subject of official investigations. The mere existence of an organization like the Black Panther Party in New York City terrified its corrupt law enforcement apparatus especially the Panther’s advocacy of “Police Decentralization and community control of Public Safety” which drew increasing support from the city’s poor communities prior to the arrest of the Panther 21 in April 1969.

The willingness of the Panthers to defend themselves against police repression and violence was turned on its head by the media and defined as “criminal tendencies”, the Panthers were accused of everything from plotting to bomb flowers in the Botanical Gardens, to schemes involving firebombing department stores during the Christian Easter season. The media accused the NY Panthers of ties to Fidel Castro and Cuba, and foreign radical groups as justification for law enforcement’s repression of BPP leadership.

In the city of Chicago, political corruption and cronyism was institutional under perennial Mayor Richard Daley. Chicago street gangs were large and well organized and by 1967 were becoming increasingly politicized. The Chicago Police, an agency comparatively corrupt as the NYPD was especially brutal and racist. This racism and brutality was witnessed by the world during the Democratic National Convention in 1968 and the police riot that ensued. The FBI had informants inside the Daley political machine, the Chicago Police Department and

the Black Panther Party. Documentation released in the civil suit brought by Fred Hampton's estate clearly show that it was an FBI informant that set-up Black Panther leader Fred Hampton for assassination by the Chicago police and it was under COINTELPRO that assassination took place. None of this was ever thoroughly investigated by the Church Committee.

With regard to COINTELPRO, the Church committee's report was based, it says, on a staff study of more than 20,000 pages of Bureau documents, and included depositions of many of the Bureau agents involved in the programs. The FBI eventually acknowledged having conducted 2,218 separate COINTELPRO actions from mid-1956 through mid-1974. These, the bureau conceded, were undertaken in conjunction with other significant illegalities: 2,305 warrantless telephone taps, 697 buggings, and the opening of 57,846 pieces of mail. This itemization, although an indicator of the magnitude and extent of FBI criminality, was far from complete. The counterintelligence campaign against the Puerto Rican independence movement was not mentioned at all, while whole categories of operational techniques - assassinations, for example, and obtaining false convictions against key activists - were not divulged with respect to the rest. There is solid evidence that other sorts of illegality were downplayed as well. **There is as yet no public record or evidence of any systematic investigation of these practices.**

The FBI's quid pro quo for cooperating in the charade of the Church Committee seems to have been that none of its agents would actually see the inside of a prison as a result of the "excesses" thereby revealed. The result was that "The Justice Department has decided not to prosecute anyone in connection with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 15-year campaign to disrupt the activities of suspected subversive organizations." J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the Civil Rights Division, reported to the attorney general that he had found "no basis for criminal charges against any particular individuals involving particular incidents."

The director of the FBI also made clear that he saw nothing particularly serious in the revelations of the Church and Pike Committees. The press paid little heed to the record that was being exposed during the Watergate period and even since has generally ignored the more serious cases and failed to present anything remotely resembling an accurate picture of the full record and what it implies. African American elected officials, over 10,000 to date and counting have shown no interest whatsoever in the program and policies that shaped and contextualized their political careers and hence the political empowerment of over 30 million

African Americans.

The object of all this muscle-flexing was, of course, to create a perception that congress had finally gotten tough, placing itself in a position to administer appropriate oversight of the FBI. It followed that citizens had no further reason to worry over what the Bureau was doing at that very moment, or what it might do in the future. But the committee had one last gasp of relevancy left.

In 1975 the Senate Select Committee concluded that in order to complete its (re)building of the required public impression, it might be necessary to risk going beyond exploration of the Bureau's past counterintelligence practices and explore ongoing (i.e.: ostensibly post-COINTELPRO) FBI conduct vis a vis political activists. Specifically at issue in this connection was what was even then being done to the American Indian Movement, and hearings were scheduled to begin in July. But this is where the Bureau, which had been reluctantly going along up to that point, drew the line. The hearings never happened. Instead, they were "indefinitely postponed" in late June of 1975, at the direct request of the FBI. 133 Exposure of FBI conduct vis a vis political activists was swept under the rug. It is this repression of political activists that lay behind the imprisonment of AIM leader Leonard Peltier for the past 40 years and why his case is not revisited.

Finally, The Church committee cites the testimony of FBI director Clarence M. Kelley as indication that even after the official end of COINTELPRO, "faced with sufficient threat, covert disruption is justified."

## **The Legacy of COINTELPRO**

In anticipation of congressional inquiry into COINTELPRO the FBI launched interim programs (1971-76) that assumed the façade of "criminal investigations" rather than political surveillance and neutralization. Two of the "investigations" NEWKILL and PRISACT would become key to the creation of the Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF), the forerunner of Home Land Security and the realization of Nixon's dream of a national police force. Neither one of these programs showed up on the Church Committee's agenda because they were classified as "criminal investigations" by the FBI. This period (1971 to 1980) is pivotal in understanding how U.S. counter-intelligence and domestic law enforcement changed its focus to target Islam in America and specifically African-American Muslims. To understand this process one must understand the history of racist political repression in the United States and decipher how that impacts on US foreign policies.

In 1973, a year before Nixon left office, U.S. intelligence agencies became



increasingly worried about revolutionary and radical Americans identifying and working with foreign liberation movements. “Homegrown terrorism” became a watchword for American law enforcement. What galvanized this fear was the killing of Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany by “Black September”. Prior to this, only a handful of radical groups in America had ties with foreign Liberation Movements. Those connections were more a matter of principle support than anything else. But as the Palestinians took their struggle to Europe, hijacking Airliners, bombing Israeli consulates, and in some instances killing American citizens, the US, Israel and its European Allies began to seriously coordinate intelligence and pool their resources. For the Americans however there was a slight problem.

Up until 1972 U.S. law enforcement had publically criminalized all radical groups especially organizations such as the BPP. The BPP was consistently portrayed in public as thugs and vilified as criminals with guns. Therefore, how to rationalize the transition from “fighting criminals” to suppressing “political terrorists” befuddled domestic police agencies. The government’s criminalization of the BPP only partially worked. In a national poll conducted in 1970 over 60% of African-Americans expressed admiration for the BPP. The character of U.S. racist and political repression was about to change once more to fit the times, in fact the U.S. government reverted to its institutional memory for a solution – the war against “terror” in America, like the “war on drugs” before it, would be a case of the same old wine in a new bottle.

## **Repression as State Policy**

The repression of dissident groups can be traced far back into US history, at least to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts, by which "the Federalists sought to suppress political opposition and to stamp out lingering sympathy for the principles of the “French Revolution,” or to the judicial murder of four anarchists for "having advocated doctrines" which allegedly lay behind the explosion of a bomb in Chicago's Haymarket Square after a striker had been killed by police in May 1886. Throughout its history, the United States, first as a racist European settler state, and now as a national-security state, sought to consolidate and develop institutions of power and control that would crush any attempts by the poor, national minorities, and indigenous peoples to achieve self-determination in any significant form. In the earlier history of the state this meant suppressing workers rights while abolishing “free labor” or chattel slavery in order to encourage industrialization and wealth accumulation.

During the first World War, when the long-time head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover (architect of COINTELPRO) led the Bureau of Investigation, thirty-five Bureau

Agents assisted by local police and military personnel and a "citizens auxiliary" of the Bureau, arrested some 50,000 men without warrants of sufficient probable cause. This mass deprivation of rights incident was justified as rounding up Army deserters and selective service violators (military draft dodgers). In 1920 the FBI, along with Immigration Bureau agents, carried out the "Palmer Raids" (authorized by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer), which, in 33 cities rounded up 10,000 persons. If this sounds familiar it is. Similar sweeps were done after September 11<sup>th</sup> by FBI, Immigrations, and police task forces. The similarities between the objectives of the COINTELPRO period (1954 -1974) and a previous era was not lost on the Church Committee.

The Church Committee cites a report of distinguished legal scholars made after the Palmer Raids, and says that the scholars "found federal agents guilty of using third-degree tortures, making illegal searches and arrests, using agents provocateurs...."

Of course at the time Attorney General Palmer justified his actions "to clean up the country almost unaided by any virile legislation" on grounds of the failure of Congress "to stamp out these seditious societies in their open defiance of law by various forms of propaganda":

Upon these two basic certainties, first that the "Reds" were criminal aliens, and secondly that the American Government must prevent crime, it was decided that there could be no distinctions drawn between the theoretical ideals of the radicals and their actual violations of our national laws. Palmer's "information showed that communism in this country was an organization of thousands of aliens, who were direct allies of Trotzky." Thus "the Government is now sweeping the nation clean of such alien filth." These notions of jingoistic patriotism enjoyed the overwhelming support of the press at the time in much the same way that white American media today supports a non-historical denigration of Islam to justify its policies in the middle-east. Clearly political repression reflected the enemy of the moment, and from 1920 until 1954 the primary enemy of capitalist America was socialism, bolshevism and Russian communism. There of course is one notable exception, the millions of descendants of former African slaves. To white American males African's in America were the perennial threat to internal order and security and had to be kept in their place. It is not coincidental therefore, that simultaneous to the Palmer Raids, Black Nationalism was the other boogey-man J. Edgar Hoover's FBI went after.

Hoover's target was Marcus Mosiah Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Under Garvey's leadership, the UNIA, which to this day retains the notoriety as the largest organization African Americans ever

assembled, devoted itself mainly to the realization of various “do for self” strategies (i.e., undertaking business ventures that could underwrite its twin goals of self-sufficiency and Pan-African unity. Pan-Africanism, a ideology of the African Diaspora, was especially dangerous in the early twentieth century when Europe maintained colonies across Africa, the Carribean, Asia and the Pacific. Even Japan’s Imperial policy capitalized on the white supremacist nature of European colonial rule, as did early Chinese Communism under Mao Tse-Tung.

Nonetheless, despite UNIA’s explicitly capitalist orientation, or maybe because of it, Hoover launched an investigation into Garvey’s activities in August 1919. When this initial investigation revealed no illegalities, Hoover’s hatred of Garvey’s “pro-Negroism,” intensified. Surely no “Negro” was smart enough to elude the FBI. It never occurred to Hoover that Garvey wasn’t doing anything illegal, or more precisely, nothing that the Robber Barons of the period, Morgan, Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller weren’t doing. Hoover ordered that the investigation not only be continued but intensified. The UNIA was quickly infiltrated by Black operatives recruited specifically for the purpose, and a number of informants developed within the organization. Still, it was another two years before the General Intelligence Division was able to find a legal pretext - Garvey’s technical violation of the laws governing offerings of corporate stock - upon which to bring charges of “mail fraud.”

Convicted in July 1923 by an all-white jury, the UNIA leader was first imprisoned in the federal prison at Atlanta, then deported as an “undesirable alien” in 1927. By then, the organization he’d founded had basically collapsed – spinning off a number of off-shoots such as the “Lost and Found Nation of Islam”, Moorish Science Temples, and a number of messianic personality cults. After destroying Marcus Garvey, Hoover had vowed to prevent anyone from ever again assuming the standing of what he called a “Negro Moses.” For the remainder of the century, Hoover’s vow became the institutional reflex of an entire government whenever African’s in America demanded their rights as Human Beings.

### **Legalizing political repression, torture, and violations Of Human Rights**

World War II brought a return of the FBI to domestic counterintelligence operations as President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a series of instructions establishing the basic domestic intelligence structure for the federal government we see today.

There is some speculation that Hoover used his personal collection of secret files on well known politicians and society figures to manipulate President Roosevelt into ceding his agency greater power than Roosevelt would have liked. In any

event Roosevelt was advised by Hoover to proceed with the utmost degree of secrecy:

*“In considering the steps to be taken for the expansion of the present structure of intelligence work, it is believed imperative that it proceed with the utmost degree of secrecy in order to avoid criticism or objections which might be raised to such an expansion by either ill-informed persons or individuals having some ulterior motive ...*

*Consequently, it would seem undesirable to seek any special legislation which would draw attention to the fact that it was proposed to develop a special counterespionage drive of any great magnitude”. 142*

According to William C. Sullivan, Hoover's assistant for many years:

“Such a very great man as Franklin D. Roosevelt saw nothing wrong in asking the FBI to investigate those opposing his lend-lease policy -- a purely political request. He also had us look into the activities of others who opposed our entrance into World War II, just as later Administrations had the FBI look into those opposing the conflict in Vietnam. It was a political request also when he [Roosevelt] instructed us to put a telephone tap, a microphone, and a physical surveillance on an internationally known leader in his Administration. It was done. The results he wanted were secured and given to him. Certain records of this kind ... were not then or later put into the regular FBI filing system. Rather, they were deliberately kept out of it”. So it was, America’s wartime President, often credited as the architect of the “New Deal” for American workers who also ushered in the feature of political repression by executive fiat.

In his lobbying efforts to secure legislation that conformed to his phobias Hoover claimed that in 1940, that *“advocates of foreign isms”* had succeeded in boring into every phase of American life, masquerading behind front organizations. Earlier, In 1939, Hoover told the House Appropriations Committee that his General Intelligence Division had compiled extensive indices of individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in subversive activities, in espionage activities, or any activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of the United States

Perhaps It would be excusable that Roosevelt, as a war time President would acquiesce to Hoover’s unconstitutional means to achieve national security. But that would be somewhat simplistic, after all, it was the Roosevelt regime that interred hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans during WWII while leaving German Americans and Italian Americans to go about their daily lives.

This was at time when European Fascism posed an imminent threat to American security. Roosevelt seems to have fully appreciated two things, first that America was entering into a global war, and second, that American's of color could not be trusted in times of national peril. In fact, even your European enemy was more trustworthy than your colored ally.

Just before the outbreak of hostilities in 1940 The Smith Act, was signed into law and made "sedition" a peacetime as well as a wartime offense. What was to follow was Hoover's secret crusade against "communist" and Negroes "influenced by communists."

The doctrine at the heart of the Smith Act was laid out clearly by Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson in his opinion upholding of the Smith Act on the grounds *"that it was no violation of free speech to convict Communists for conspiring to teach or advocate the forcible overthrow of the government, even if no clear and present danger could be proved."* Because if the clear and present danger test were applied, Jackson argued, *"it means that Communist plotting is protected during its period of incubation; its preliminary stages of organization and preparation are immune from the law, the Government can move only after imminent action is manifest, when it would, of course, be too late."* Thus there must be *"some legal formula that will secure an existing order against revolutionary radicalism.... There is no constitutional right to 'gang up' on the Government."* Opposition tendencies, however minuscule, must be nipped in the bud prior to "imminent action." This is precisely the logic used by successive U.S. Presidents culminating in the policies of the Bush administration that justified torture of Muslim terror suspects, indefinite imprisonment of detainees, Rendition, and suppression of Islamic Relief and charitable agencies.

After World War II, the FBI's attention turned from fascism to communism. This was the beginning of the Cold War. In March of 1946, Hoover informed Attorney General Tom Clark that the FBI had found it necessary to intensify its investigation of Communist party activities and Soviet espionage cases and it was taking steps to list all members of the Communist party and any others who might be dangerous in the event of a break with the Soviet Union, or other serious crisis involving the United States and the USSR. In Hoover's mind however, criminalizing white collar mostly Jewish communists was not the way to go. Instead, "ordinary conspiracy principles" sufficed to charge any individual associated with CPUSA with responsibility for and participation in all that makes up the Party's program" and "even an individual," acting alone and apart from any "conspiracy," "cannot claim that the Constitution protects him in advocating or teaching overthrow of government by force or violence." Once again U.S. domestic

repressive policies fed off of the pitfalls and anxiety of U.S foreign policies.

## **The Post War Consolidation of Right-Wing Power and the Black Liberation Movements**

In 1948, the Mundt-Nixon bill, calling for the registration of the Communist party, was reported out of Nixon's House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUACT). Senate liberals objected, and after President Truman's veto they proposed as a substitute the ultimate weapon of repression: concentration camps to intern potential troublemakers on the occasion of some loosely defined future '*Internal Security Emergency*,' including, "*insurrection within the United States in aid of a foreign enemy*". This substitute bill was advocated by U.S. Senators Benton, Douglas, Graham, Kefauver, Kilgore, Lehman, and Humphrey, then a freshman senator. Humphrey later voted against the bill, though he did not retreat from his concentration camp proposal. In fact, he was concerned that the conference committee had brought back "*a weaker bill, not a bill to strike stronger blows at the Communist menace, but weaker blows.*" The problem with the new bill was that those interned in the detention centers would have "the right of habeas corpus so they could be released and "go on to do their dirty business."

The writ of "habeas corpus" Latin for "you shall have body" is a provision in U.S. law (writ) rooted in the Magna Carta, or *Magna Carta Liberatum*. Essentially a English legal charter, aimed at curbing the absolute power of the English King and providing for the legal rights of those subjected to prosecution, the Magna Carta was the results the merchant class of England rise to power. Europe's Kings and Potentates routinely locked away their rivals and enemies of the throne without trial or any right to appeal their sentence or to be heard in an open forum. "Rendition" as practiced by the Americans today, or the policy of "detaining" individuals without trial as practiced by the European settler-state of Israel in the occupied territories, derive their "precedence" in international laws crafted by European nation-states (governments) to devolve the arbitrary powers taken from the Monarchial system (by the Magna Carta) back to the "state".

It is this process that expresses itself in the form of "national security exclusionary rules" in courts of law and as state repression of radical views. Civil and criminal law becomes increasingly anti-democratic as the national-security state and finance capital become increasing interwoven and interdependent. In this arrangement, writ of civilian Habeas Corpus is not as important as the "civil rights of a corporation" or the "national security" interests of the state. It is this confluence of finance-capital and the State that former American President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of and superficially identified as the "Military-

Industrial Complex”.

The MIC is but one component, albeit vital, of the modern National Security nation-state. The political system of such a state is relative and often irrelevant as witnessed by collaboration between authoritarian regimes and so called “democracies” when it comes to issues of “national security” and “regional stability”. The national-security state perceives all of its citizens as potential subversives, to be controlled, disciplined, and watched. Consequently, another vital component of such a state is the “Corporate Security Industry” and Prisons. These two entities are symbiotic – they feed off of each other and are multi-billion dollar a year industries that rely on criminalizing social and economic conditions for profit. In the U.S. there are over 2.5 million people under lock and key, the majority African-American and people of color. Again, examining the evolution of racist and political repression in the United States illustrate how democratic values are undermined to achieve national and domestic political objectives.

**According to many civil rights experts the first formal COINTELPRO, was aimed at the U.S. Communist Party, commenced on August 28, 1956. Although this was the first instance in which the Internal Security Branch was instructed to employ the full range of extralegal techniques developed by the bureau's counterintelligence specialists against a domestic target in a centrally coordinated and programmatic way, the FBI had conducted such operations against the CP and to a lesser extent the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) on an ad hoc basis at least as early as 1941.**

Hoover began around the same time to include a section on "Negro Organizations" in reports otherwise dedicated to "Communist Organizations" and "Axis Fifth Columnists." It can be inferred from this that Hoover placed Black organizations at the same threat category as Right Wing crypto-Nazis and Left Wing communists. Perhaps it is a coincidence but the same year as the Communist Control Act, a statute outlawing the CP and prohibiting its members from holding certain types of employment was passed, the U.S. Supreme Court made its landmark school desegregation ruling in *Brown vs the Board of Education* declaring “separate but equal” unconstitutional. After the 1954 Supreme court ruling the “civil rights” phase of the Black Liberation struggle began in earnest.

From the latter half of 50’s through the “turbulent sixties” institutional white supremacy resisted racial equality unleashing waves of right-wing terrorism upon America’s Black population. Black leaders were assassinated, Black organizations infiltrated and disrupted. By the middle of the sixties the Black Power Movement

emerged from the non-violent civil rights movement. The principle of “armed self-defense” against racist attack became the major distinguishing factor between Integrationists and Black Power advocacy. Immediately leaders like H. Rap Brown, Kwame Toure (Stokely Carmichael) and other advocates of Black Power were targeted by the FBI.

In 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded and its leaders and members became the primary targets of COINTELPRO. Top BPP leaders, Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, were persecuted and the former thrown in jail and the latter hounded into exile. Dozens of other Panthers were killed by police, imprisoned or driven into exile. By 1971 the BPP was decimated and those BPP members who were driven underground formed the nucleus of the clandestine Black Liberation Army. For the most part BLA fighters came from the ranks of those targeted by the FBI’s COINTELPRO campaign. Panther leaders such as Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Sekou Odinga, to name a few, were specific subjects of the FBI’s surveillance and neutralization operations such as the FBI’s “agitator index”, “Subversive Index” and were placed in their “Black Nationalist Photo Album” for neutralization on sight by local agencies.

The arrests and capture of these BPP/BLA members swelled the ranks of Black Political Prisoners compelling the FBI to establish its “Prison Activist Surveillance” program (PRISACTS). PRISACT would function as the first Federal and State prison program designed to track and identify prisoners religious and political affiliations, and neutralize those affiliation. Black activist prisoners, George Jackson, Imam Jamil Al-Amin, (formerly H. Rap Brown) Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Nuh Abdul Qayyum, Jalil Muntaqim, Herman Bell, and scores of others were all targeted in prison under PRISACTS. PRISACT also served to monitor and inform the techniques of “behavior modification”, development of isolation and deprivation units and psychological torture used against prisoners being pioneered at the time. America’s prisons were becoming hotbeds of radicalism, and centers of religious conversion.

### **Prisons, Political Prisoners and Growth of Islam In America**

America’s “prison movement” exploded onto the national scene with the murder of imprisoned BPP Field Marshal George Jackson followed several weeks later by Prison rebellions in New York’s Auburn and Attica maximum-security Prisons. Over three dozen prison guards and inmates died in the Attica rebellion alone where one of the prisoners demands included “repatriation to a non-imperialist country”, a clear indication that the rebellious inmates were highly political if somewhat naive.



By the mid-seventies African-American's attraction to Islam and the influx of immigrant Muslims made Islam the fastest growing religion in America. Court victories banning discriminatory treatment of Muslims in Prison allowed prisoners "freedom" to openly practice Islam. These circumstances presented a renewed challenge to racist and political repression the government thought it had ironed out. In a country which prides itself on the concept of "freedom of religion" and separation of "church and state" monitoring and neutralizing Blacks who were both politically active and Muslim presented a dilemma.

Beginning as early as 1971 local law enforcement once more turned its attention to neutralizing Islam's appeal to a Black Population radicalized by the sixties. The FBI's renewed interest in Islam as a tool of Black subversives focused on the Northeast where the Dar'ul Islam movement, based in Brooklyn attracted scores of Black youth seeking shelter from the backlash of sixties repression. As indicated earlier, with the assassination of Malcolm X in 1964 preceded by Muhammad Ali's denunciation of his erstwhile mentor, the FBI presumed any popular attraction or credibility the Nation of Islam may have had was effectively destroyed and by extension orthodox Islam discredited. FBI documents clearly indicate that their infiltration of the NOI was extensive and extended into the inner circles of Elijah Muhammad, making a compelling case for the government encapsulation of the NOI. With the assassination of Malcolm X the importance of the NOI as a militant Black organization diminished immediately. None of the COINTELPRO files which set forth the objectives of the program named Elijah Muhammad as the type of leader that could galvanize or inspire Black youth. The FBI understood the cult like character the NOI and shifted its focus away that organization permitting its survival for their own counter-intelligence purposes. Without the eloquence of Malcolm X and his incisive political analysis the NOI presented little potential for political activism.

The government achieved two objectives with the assassination of Malcolm X. First, it prevented the rise of a "Black messiah" who could galvanize the Black masses, a stated COINTELPRO objective and Hoover's vow. Second, Malcolm X's murder, instructively, occurred after his Hajj to Mecca and his denunciation of NOI's messianic dogma as un-Islamic. Malcolm's discovery of true Islam and move away from the messianic dogma preached by the NOI, represented a threat too serious for the U.S. government to ignore. To most Blacks in America, Malcolm X was the face and voice of Islam. If Malcolm X, (who had changed his name after Hajj to Malik Shabazz), were permitted to champion the cause of African-America for human rights before the broader community of Muslims, Islam in America could become both a spiritual and political force attractive to Black youth who found the pacifism of Institutional Christianity unappealing.

The U.S. Government, for its part, viewed such a development as potentially catastrophic. Until the rise of Malcom X as a spokesperson for the NOI the FBI had little fear Black youth would join the NOI in any significant numbers. The NOI message resonated with prisoners, former drug addicts, and individuals in need of rigid external discipline and authoritarian leadership. In addition its “theology” insured that it would remain a cult like entity within the African community attracting few actual followers. The NOI effectively camouflaged of Black capitalism attracted some Black business figures but the NOI would never become a mass organization. To the FBI the NOI was a perfect foil to political Black Nationalism – which the government did fear. Malcolm X’s removal from the scene permitted Elijah Muhammad and his followers to return to the role of messianic irrelevancy sects like the NOI had been permitted to play. Malcolm’s assassination couldn’t have come at more auspicious moment for the U.S. government.

By the time Malcom X was eliminated the “civil rights” struggle in the South had radically intensified. Each summer America was convulsed by urban rebellions in its major cities. Black church bombings, and racist state repression intensified as institutional white supremacy came under increasing pressure from all quarters. U.S. involvement in Vietnam generated a volatile, predominantly white middle-class “anti-war” movement and “counter-culture” (more on this later).

But by the early 70s the rise in numbers of Orthodox Muslims in America quickly disavowed the FBI and law enforcement of this perception. As seen by the evolution of both “legal” statutes and re-organization of Law enforcement since 1971, the expansion of police powers beginning with the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, and the launching of Nixon’s “War on Drugs” criminalization of Black radicalism concealed many aspects of the government’s strategic objective to marginalize African-American Muslims and separate them from “mainstream” Islam. This aspect of political repression was mainly defensive at first, aimed at curtailing the influence of foreign Liberation movements on American activism. But the Palestinian struggle and their armed attacks on Western targets and the impression such attacks had on young alienated Blacks were of concern to U.S. officials. For the FBI, maintaining a division between Blacks and orthodox Islam assumed new urgency.

The murders of a Black Hanafi Imam’s family in Wahshington D.C. by adherents to NOI doctrine was one of the earlier indications of this change in governments disruption efforts designed to stigmatize African-American Muslims. Racist political repression had assumed a decidedly anti-Islamic undertone that would become full blown by 1979 and the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and establishment of the Islamic Republic. This event more than any other shifted

U.S. intelligence priorities away from radical Left movements to a preoccupation with suppressing Muslim unity both at home and abroad. This concern was shared by all European states with significant Muslim populations including America's erstwhile cold-war adversary, the former soviet union. It is perhaps no coincidence that by the end of the eighties the empire the European Russians called the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", began to disintegrate into its constituent components, and by the early 90s many of the former Soviet States with majority Muslim populations began agitating for greater independence and Islamic identity, some states even engaging in arm rebellion against Moscow's writ.

The seeds for the global "war on terror" by the west were planted and growing before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan help define the modern confrontation between Western imperialism and Muslim resistance to foreign domination. It is worth noting that with the fall of Russian communism the pre-communist Imperial ideology of Slavic domination of Asia reasserted itself. A significant number Russian radical groups today are anti-Muslim, anti-immigration, and white supremacist orthodox Christians.

Finally, in its last regard to COINTELPRO, the Church committee's based its report on a staff study of more than 20,000 pages of Bureau documents, and included depositions of many of the Bureau agents involved in the programs. The FBI eventually acknowledged having conducted 2,218 separate COINTELPRO actions from mid-1956 through mid-1974. These, the bureau conceded, were undertaken in conjunction with other significant illegalities: 2,305 warrantless telephone taps, 697 buggings, and the opening of 57,846 pieces of mail. This itemization, although an indicator of the magnitude and extent of FBI criminality, was far from complete. The counterintelligence campaign against the Puerto Rican independence movement was not mentioned at all, while whole categories of operational techniques - assassinations, for example, and obtaining false convictions against key activists - were not divulged with respect to the rest.

There is solid evidence that other sorts of illegality were downplayed as well. *The FBI's quid pro quo for cooperating in this charade seems to have been that none of its agents would actually see the inside of a prison as a result of the "excesses" thereby revealed. The result was that "The Justice Department has decided not to prosecute anyone in connection with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 15-year campaign to disrupt the activities of suspected subversive organizations."* J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the Civil Rights Division, reported to the attorney general that he had found "no basis for criminal charges against any particular individuals involving particular incidents."

The director of the FBI also made clear that he saw nothing particularly serious in

the revelations of the Church and Pike Committees. **There is as yet no public record or evidence of any systematic investigation of these practices.** The press paid little heed to the record that was being exposed during the Watergate period and even since has generally ignored the more serious cases and failed to present anything remotely resembling an accurate picture of the full record and what it implies.

The object of all this muscle-flexing was, of course, to create a perception that congress had finally gotten tough, placing itself in a position to administer appropriate oversight of the FBI. It followed that citizens had no further reason to worry over what the Bureau was doing at that very moment, or what it might do in the future.

In 1975 the Senate Select Committee concluded that in order to complete its (re)building of the required public impression, it might be necessary to risk going beyond exploration of the Bureau's past counterintelligence practices and explore ongoing (i.e.: ostensibly post-COINTELPRO) FBI conduct vis a vis political activists. Specifically at issue in this connection was what was even then being done to the American Indian Movement, and hearings were scheduled to begin in July. But this is where the Bureau, which had been reluctantly going along up to that point, drew the line. The hearings never happened. Instead, they were "indefinitely postponed" in late June of 1975, at the direct request of the FBI.

The Church committee cites the testimony of FBI director Clarence M. Kelley as indication that even after the official end of COINTELPRO, "faced with sufficient threat, covert disruption is justified."

U.S. Political Prisoners from the various movements savaged by the FBI and racist law enforcement techniques, Leonard Peltier of AIM, Mumia Abu Jamal former BPP member, Imam Jamil Al-Amin, the former Chairman of SNCC and a COINTELPRO target, are only a few of the dozens of Political Prisoners in the U.S. who have been imprisoned before the spirit and the writ of COINTELPRO was codified into the modern Patriot Act. What they all had in common was the idea that oppressed people had a right to defend themselves from racist attack, illegal assault, and resist state sanctioned attempted Murder. This idea is still dangerous in today's world where "state terrorism" is the accepted norm, non-state resistance to that terrorism is criminalized and subject to state prosecution. The recent murder of an African-American Imam by the FBI in the city of Detroit is but the latest incident in the long running war against radical change in America and in the composition of US domestic and foreign policies.

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Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, former U.S. Political Prisoner

Contributions: R. J. Boyle, Attorney at Law, U.S.

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